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Public Administration, Human Resources
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REPORT TO THE CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR HUMAN RESOURCES PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND UTILISATION ON HUMAN RESOURCES PLANNING FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Human resources planning is one subject which, until recently, received little attention in Africa. The development strategies adopted by many African countries in the 1960s and 1970s assumed that if necessary skills for the industrial sector could be produced and national outputs increased, the problems of employment and development could be solved. That was a mistaken belief.

Given the preferred objective of increasing economic growth and development, it is difficult to envisage how African governments contemplated achieving this objective in the light of their neglect of the agricultural sector and the human resources planning function. The predominance of the agricultural sector in many African economies should have, at least, entailed making agriculture one of the development priority area. Manpower planning should have aimed at providing the necessary skills for transforming the agricultural sector. The undue emphasis placed on the modern sector (manufacturing and the export enclaves) further distorted the economic structures and, in its wake, Africa's capacity to lay down the basis for self-sustaining economic growth was undermined - especially after the collapse of world price of primary exports which made it difficult to import the necessary inputs for the import-dependent manufacturing sector.

The toll of such policies on human resources in terms of literacy, health, poverty and skill acquisition were very dismal. By the end of the 1970's, the inherent weaknesses in the African development strategy had become obvious. As a consequence, the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) adopted by the OAU in 1980, set an agenda for socio-economic recovery and development in Africa. As the human conditions deteriorated further in Africa in the 1980s, the LPA was followed by the OAU's Africa Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER), 1986-90; the Khartoum Declaration, 1989; and the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programme for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP), 1989. While the policy directions of the above initiatives are yet to be implemented, they set the following as the main objectives for socio-economic recovery and development in Africa:

(a) make development human-centered by alleviating poverty and raising the welfare of the people,

(b) establish a self-sustaining process of economic growth and development, and

(c) integrate African economies so as to achieve national and regional collective self-reliance.1/

To achieve these broad objectives, the above initiatives list the following human resources policies as being necessary:

(i) expand basic education and literacy so as to improve literacy and numeracy skills of the wider population and, among farmers, raise agricultural productivity,

(ii) reform higher education to make it relevant to the developmental objectives and priorities,

(iii) increase investment in human resources development,

(iv) raise self-confidence of the African population by offering appropriate education,

(v) make human resources planning an integral part of the development part of the development planning process, and

(vi) increase the utilization of human resources by promoting and integrating the agricultural and informal sectors with other sectors of the domestic economy.

Financing such increased investment in human resources can be forthcoming from expenditure switching. For example, instead of paying too much for the military, the resources should be redirected towards human resources development and planning.

I. INTRODUCTION

Human resources planning is central to the attainment of socio-economic recovery and development in Africa. While taking human resources as the active factors of production, African governments do not seem to have considered the development and planning of human resources an important and integral part of the national development planning process. This neglect of human resources planning has meant that high-level skilled manpower shortages continue to co-exist with high levels of unemployment rates. With pervasive skill shortages and high levels of unemployment, increasing national output becomes very difficult. Inequitable income distribution tends to increase poverty.

Compled with the neglect of the agricultural sector, Africa's desire to even achieve food self-sufficiency has not been possible. With the financial squeeze of the 1980s, the capacity to import such foodstuffs has been reduced, and coupled with the decline in agricultural production, the incidence of hunger and poverty has greatly increased.

Without seeking to be too detailed, the report seeks to give an overview and diagnostic analysis of past human resources planning policies and practices in Africa. In the context of such an analysis, the report then proceeds to put forward some policy proposals and how such policies could be financed.

The report discusses in section 2 the nature of the current human resources problems in Africa; in section 3, the policies and financing of human resources planning for socio-economic recovery and development and in section 4 the summary and conclusions.

2. A DIAGNOSTIC ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

The factors which account for Africa's economic crisis include the economic structures, the educational system, the neglect of human resources planning, the debt and structural adjustment programmes and, to a large extent, the political and value systems.

The effective planning for the development and utilisation of human resources has mainly been hampered by the lop-sided economic structures and the fact that human resources has not been an integral part of the Africa development planning process. Many African governments worked on the assumption that as long as national income was rising, employment opportunities would rise as well. As a consequence, they saw no need to integrate employment generation policies in their respective development planning process.

The import-substitution industralization strategy which was adopted relied on foreign skills, inputs and capital goods. As such, its capacity to generate more productive employment opportunities was very limited. Table 1 shows that in 1965, industry accounted for as low as 1 per cent of the labour force in Mali and Niger, respectively, and as high as 25 per cent in Mauritius. Out of the 41 African countries listed in the table, only 8 had their respective industrial sectors accounting for more than 10 per cent of the labour force in 1965.

The situation had not changed significantly by the 1985-87 period. The industrial sectors' share of the labour force ranged from 1.6 per cent in Burundi to about 34 per cent in Mauritius. In this latter period, 13 African countries had their industrial sectors accounting for more than 10 per cent of the labour force.

It would seem that the services sector (especially the public sector) accounted for a sizeable proportion of the labour force in Africa. During the 1985-87 period for example, the share of the labour force in the services sector ranged from 4.3 per cent in Rwanda to 59 per cent in Algeria. However, the agricultural sector (i.e., traditional agriculture, the under-employed and the unemployed) account, on average, for more than 75 per cent of the labour force.

The neglect of the agricultural sector has resulted into widespread poverty in the rural areas and reduced the capacity of Africa to attain food self-sufficiency. Table 1 shows that while the population below the poverty line in the urban areas, over the 1977-87 period, ranged from 10 per cent in

Kenya to 60 per cent in Ethiopia, the figures for the rural areas are much higher. As high as 90 per cent of the rural population in Rwanda and 91 per cent in the Central Africa Republic were below the poverty-line over the same period. It comes as no surprise, therefore that only 12 countries were able to increase their per capita food production. In countries such as Lesotho and Zimbabwe, per capita food production fell by 20 per cent from 1981 to 1988.

Thus, Africa has not been in a position to effectively utilise its human resources because of the neglect of agriculture, the reliance on imported technogogies, and the unfavourable external exonomic situation - especially the fall in the real price of primary exports. All these factors have resulted into widespread poverty and starvation. Such high levels of poverty, as demonstrated above, may act to hinder the attainment of socio-economic recovery and development in Africa.

In the 1980s, chronic balance of payments problems, mounting external debt and poor performance of the domestic economies of many African countries led to the adoption of structural adjustment programmes (SAP). Many of such SAPs were implemented on the recommendations of the World Bank and/or the IMF. As a rule, SAPs recommended cutting the size of the public sector, reduce government expediture on social services, devalue local currencies, and remove subsidies on consumer goods. The impact of these on human resources development and utilisation, inflation, poverty, etc. were, to put it mildly, disasterous.2/ Expenditure on education, health, etc, and employment declined, while inflation and poverty increased. Despite the adoption of SAPs, the balance of payments and external debt problems and poor performance of the domestic economies still continue to-date.

As mentioned above, the lack of explicit employment policies amounted to the neglect of human resources issues in the development planning process, while many governments acknowledged the importance of education and/or literacy in national development, little was done in establishing appropriate educational systems that would cater for the local developmental needs. In many countries, higher education confined itself to providing liberal arts for the first five or ten years of its existence. Even when technical and scientific training programmes were introduced later, their mode of instruction were not geared to relevance, problem-solving, etc. but to the attainment of higher grades in the final examinations. Such paper-qualification syndrome have, in recent years, led to increased numbers of higher education graduates becoming unemployed and/or unemployable. Given the high opportunity costs involved in training, such waste is costly to Africa economies.

In many African countries, the importance of human resources planning is not appreciated. This is the case even in those countries which have divisions/ministries for manpower planning and/or development. The manpower planning agencies often face the problems of lack of skilled and experienced manpower, lack of authority on manpower issues and the lack of enabling facilities such as equipment for data processing, inadequate budgets, etc.

Human resources planning is made all the more difficult in recent years by the unstable and declining economies. Effective planning requires that present and past experiences should enable the planner to predict the future with reasonable acuracy. In a situation where technology, financial resources, etc. are exogenous, and hand to month tactics are a rule rather than an exception, planning human resources becomes hazardous. The assumptions on which the forecasts and hence the plans are based have to be continuiously revised. In the context of understaffed human resources planning agencies and data problems, such frequent revisions might not be possible and hence planning becomes redundant.

Human resources planning is further impeded by the political and social value systems. The cases of certain African governments prefering expatriate opinions over that of nationals, poor pay of indigenous experts relative to expatriates, and, as is often the the case, the lack of free speech have contributed to out migration by many an Africa expert. What is more, some African governments do not seem to appreciate the extent and consequences of such massive brain drain. An often quoted statistic to demonstrate the point is that of some 80,000 expatriate technical assistance personnel in 1988 working in 40 sub-Sahara Africa at a cost of at least US$40 billion.3/

In terms of priorities, Table 1 demonstrates that many African governments consider the military more important than human resources development. The table shows that national governments committed in 1986, a sizeable proportion of GNP to military expenditure. Foreign donors seem to give more generously to the military than to the other sectors of the economy.

It is perhaps the ratio of military expenditure to health and education expenditure, and the ratio of armed forces to teachers that shows how human resources planning is perceived in Africa. In terms of the former, the ratio of military expenditure to health and education expenditures in 1986,

ranged from 15 times in Niger to 323 times in Uganda. In all, 27 countries spent 50 times or more on the military than on health and education combined.

With regard to the armed forces as a percentage of teachers, Table 1 shows that in 1986, Kenya and Mauritius had the lowest at 10 per cent, and Ethiopia at 494 per cent and Somalia at at 525 per cent had the highest. Imports of arms were over the US$1 billion mark in three countries.

Having given the flavour of the nature of the problems affecting human resources planning in Africa, we now turn to look at the policies which are necessary for achieving human resources planning for socio-economic recovery and development.

3. HUMAN RESOURCES PLANNING FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT

The objective function of human resources planning is to tranform Africa from its current economic crises to self-sustained and self-sufficient (in relative terms) economic growth and development. To do this, the human resources base needs to be broadened and deepened.4/ The broadening and deepening of the human resources base can be attained through the following policies:

(a) making education relevant to the development needs,

(b) increasing investment in human resources such as education, health and food security,

(c) making human resources planning an integral part of the development planning process,

(d) raising self-confidence of the African population at the individual and government level,

(e) increasing human resources utilisation by promoting and integrating the agricultural sector with other sectors of the economy,

(d) re-directing some of the resources currently being committed to, say, the military to the human development sector,

(e) negotiate with bilateral technical assistance agencies to consider shifting their training policies towards strengthening higher education in the recipient countries,

(f) where possible, introduce some form of human resources development tax on large corporations, and

(g) mount well co-ordinated public campaigns to raise public awareness on the need for increased expenditures on human development and its long-term benefits.

We now turn to look at some of the above policy suggestions in some details.

(a) Making Education Relevant

To make education relevant to the development needs of Africa would first require a change in African attitude of dependency and the feeling of helplessness that seem to affect the African society. To enhance the relevance of the educational system, interaction with other sectors of the economy through research, vacation employment, study visits, talks, etc. needs to be encouraged. Through these, institutions of learning at all levels should be made aware of what goes on in the real world. On the other hand, the labour market agents will also come to know how the educational systems functions and may therefore be in a position to make practical suggestions that may prove beneficial to both parties.

More importantly, given the low confidence in locally trained personnel, potential employers need to be made aware much, if at all, is being made to improve both the structure and quality of the educational system. For example, the lack of facilities in technical colleges can be compensated by placing students with industrial employers with the necessary infrastructure.

Not only does higher education need to increase the outputs of scientific and technical personnel but such training should be directed at solving the various problems Africa is faced with. Training aimed at problem - solving, creativity and tackling Africa problem head on have the added benefit of increasing self-confidence and the breaking-up of the dependency culture that characterise contemporary African society. Such an approach, enhanced by increased practical training, will also help to minimise the paper qualifications syndrome.

(b) Increased Investment in Human Resources Development

To enhance the capability of human resources to engineer the economic transformation process requires that more resources are committed to human capital. As a first step, and in the wake of the end of the cold war, the proportion of resources devoted to the armed forces be reduced. While recent events in other parts of Africa may make this inpracticable, in the long-term, efforts should be directed at this source of resources for increased investment in training, health and increased food security.

Increased investment in human resources development would help to attain universal primary education and for higher education, increase the supply of middle- and high-level manpower to agriculture and industry.

Increased literacy and numeracy skills of farmers would help to improve agricultural productivity. Among women, literacy may help to improve child survival by reducing fertility, etc.

The funding for increased spending on human resources development can be sourced from donor agencies which, hitherto, have been sending indigenous personnel to donor countries for further training. Through negotiations, such agencies might be persuaded to accept the fact that increased spending on training locally would make such training relevant to the local needs than training which is given in a different environment.

Further, depending on the impact on allocative efficiency, taxation of big corporations which stand to benefit most from increased investment in human resources may be introduced to raise some of the necessary funds. To target such resources to human resources development, a special fund will need to be created so that all the funds collected through these means are channelled to the right places.

Increased investment into human resources development will come to nothing unless measures are taken to arrest the rapid population growth rates and to adopt policies that improve Africa's capacity to retain the high level manpower. The former can be attained by demonstrating to the general public that smaller families are in their own individual interests. Access to family planning devices and literature, should be increased; attitudes towards large families should also be changed.

The latter presents some problems. Many African countries at the moment cannot offer pay packages that are even half of what their nationals earn in developed countries. Even where they can, political consideration, may make it impracticable. Instead, efforts should be directed at making conditions at home more conducive for nationals working abroad to return. Domestic production should be increased so as to reduce infliation and thereby improve the standard of living. African governments should also demonstrate their commitment to some forms of free expression, and show some preference of local national expert opinions over and above those of expatriates.

(c) Making Human Resources Planning an Integral Part of the Development Planning Process

Evidence from the 1988 Africa Employment Report suggests that manpower planners in Africa are either not provided with long-term directives by policy-makers or where such directives

are given, they are too vague to provide a basis for manpower policy. The report also suggests that the inadequate administrative and institutional machinery makes systematic manpower planning difficult. As a consequence, manpower planning is not integrated with the national development planning process.5/

To plan human resources necessary for socio-economic recovery and development, manpower planning should be accorded the importance it deserves. Manpower planning should concentrate on making regular reports and the analysis of the labour market situations and trends, so as to provide an early warning system for labour market imbalances. In addition, manpower planning should draw much of its attention to the manpower and employment issues in the rural (agricultural) sector.

Unless there is a political commitment to the planning of human resources for agricultural development, the manpower planning function will continue to be ineffective and thus reduce the chances of economic transformation through agricultural development. Given the emphasis on agricultural development and self-sufficiency, educational and manpower planning should seek to make the requisite skills for these priority areas of fundamental importance.

(d) Promoting and Integrating the Agricultural Sector with Other Sectors of the Economy

To promote and integrate the agricultural sector with the other sectors of the economy will require an increased supply of skilled and/or literate manpower. The neglect of the agricultural sector by the manpower planning authorities in the past have contributed to the stagnation of the sector.

To the extent that there are few local industries in Africa which produce agricultural implements such as hoes, ploughs, axes, etc., the informal sector (and/or small-scale industries) should be strengthened to provide such goods. The human resources planning process should therefore define a role for the informal sector/small-scale industries in the transformation of agriculture.

Much of the modern industrial activities in Africa consists of last stage processing and/or packaging. Increased agricultural production would therefore necessitate the establishment of first-stage processing such as ginneries, seed-oil crushing plants, etc. that could provide intermediate inputs to the existing industries. Such an increase in

industrial activities would enhance internal productive linkages and improve the utilisation of human resources through increased employment.

To increase the usage of local raw and intermediate agricultural inputs, the usual complaints by TNCs of poor quality, etc. should not be entertained. If anything, such TNCs should be asked to improve the quality. The foreign exchange saved from reduced imports of inputs can further be used to enhance the human resources planning such as increased investment in education, literacy campagins, health, etc.

4. CONCLUSION

This report has demonstrated that if socio-economic recovery and development is to be attained in Africa, human resources planning has to be integrated with the national development planning process. Such an approach would help to make development human-centred by improving the living standards of the Africa population. In addition, the increase in human resources development would help to make economic growth and development self-sustaining and self reliant.

The report suggested that human resources planning for economic recovery and development would need to be oriented towards making education relevant to the development needs; increase investment in human resources; make human resources planning an integral part of the national planning process; and promoting and integrating the agricultural sector with other sectors in the domestic economy. Such human resources planning initiatives could be funded through existing budgets by switching resources from low-priority areas such as the military. In addition, bilateral donor agencies who provide technical manpower training programmes could be asked to switch from sending recipient country nationals to those of the donor countries for training. Instead, using the same resources to fund training locally could prove much more beneficial to the recipient countries. The report has also argued that, if the situation dictates, African governments many consider some forms of corporate taxation that could be used for human resources development.

Finally, whatever policy suggestions one puts forward, it is the African governments who have to implement any such policy suggestions. In the recent past, however, short-term and not long-term considerations have seemed to pre-occupy many an African government. As a consequence, the objectives of LPA, APPER, UN-PAARD, and AFF-SAP still remain as elusive as ever. But, unless steps are taken to arrest the current economic crisis, Africa's prospects for socio-economic recovery and development are dismal.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. UNECA, The African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation, E/ECA/CM.15/6/Rev.3. (Addis Ababa: ECA, 1989), pp.9-15.

2. For a discussion of the impact of SAPs on the African economies, see ibid.

3. ECA, Handbook for Manpower Planners in Africa, ECA/PHSD/HRP/89/26[6.1(iii)(a)]. (Addis Ababa: ECA, 1989), p.5.

4. C. Grey-Johnson, "The Way Forward" in C. Grey-Johnson (ed), The Employment Crisis in Africa: Issues in Human Resources Development Policy, (Harare: African Association for Public Administration and Management, 1990), p.158.

5. For a discussion of the shortcomings, problems and prospects for manpower planning in Africa, see ILO/JASPA, African Employment Report 1988, (Addis Ababa: ILO, 1989), ch. IV.

Table 1: Some Indicators in Africa

COUNTRY	LABOUR FORCE AS % OF POP	LABOUR FORCE IN AGRIC. %		LABOUR FORCE IN INDUSTY %		LABOUR FORCE IN SERVICES %		POPULATION BELOW POVERTY LINE 1977-87		MILITARY EXPEND. % GNP	RATIO OF MILITARY TO EDUC. & HEALTH	ARMS IMPORTS US$MIL	RATIO OF ODA TO MILITARY EXPENDIT.	SOLDIERS AS % OF TEACHERS	GNP PER CAPITA GROWTH PA	PER CAPITA FOOD PRODN INDEX 1979/81=100
	1988	1965	1985-87	1965	1985-87	1965	1985-87	URBAN%	RURAL%	1986	1986	1987	1986	1986	1965-88	1986-88
Niger	51.4	95	85	1	2.7	4	12.3	-	35	0.7	15	10	25.6	22	-2.3	83
Mali	31.8	90	85.5	1	2	8	12.5	27	48	2.5	64	40	12	38	1.6	97
B. Faso	46.8	89	86.6	3	4.3	7	9.1	-	-	3	88	0	7.7	57	1.2	116
S. Leone	35.5	78	69.6	11	14.1	11	16.4	-	65	1.2	32	0	5.4	20	-	101
Chad	35.1	82	83.2	3	4.6	5	12	30	56	6	231	100	4.1	233	-2	103
Guinea	45.7	87	80.7	6	9	7	10.3	-	-	3	75	50	3.1	77	-	93
Somalia	29.4	81	75.6	6	8.4	13	16	40	70	4.4	71	20	7.4	525	0.5	100
Mauritania	33.4	89	69.4	3	8.9	8	21.7	-	-	4.9	62	0	5.5	200	-0.4	89
Benin	47.1	83	70.2	5	6.6	12	23.1	-	65	2.3	53	0	5.3	19	0.1	110
Burundi	52.3	94	92.9	2	1.6	4	5.5	55	85	3.5	100	20	4.6	71	3	100
Mozambique	54.6	87	84.5	6	7.4	7	8.1	-	-	7	-	120	1.6	73	-	83
Malawi	42	92	83.4	3	7.4	5	9.3	25	85	2.3	38	0	6.6	31	1.1	85
Sudan	32.1	82	64.9	5	3.9	14	31.2	-	85	5.9	140	50	1.8	88	0	89
CAR	48.4	88	83.7	3	2.8	9	13.5	-	91	1.7	26	0	10.7	50	-0.5	87
Senegal	43.9	83	80.6	6	6.2	11	13.1	-	-	2.3	40	5	8.3	59	-0.8	106
Ethiopia	45.4	86	79.8	5	7.9	9	12.3	60	65	8.6	165	1000	1.4	494	-0.1	89
Zaire	36.9	82	81.5	9	12.9	9	15.6	-	80	3	250	30	2.9	17	-2.1	98
Rwanda	49.2	94	92.8	2	3	3	4.3	30	90	1.9	50	0	6.8	33	1.5	82
Angola	41.4	79	73.8	8	9.5	13	16.7	-	-	12	273	1600	-	165	-	87
Nigeria	37.5	72	68.1	10	11.7	18	20.2	-	-	1	56	60	0	30	0.9	103
Liberia	36.2	79	74.2	10	9.4	11	16.4	-	23	2.2	34	10	4.4	55	-	92
Togo	41	78	64.3	9	6.3	13	29.4	42	-	3.2	45	0	7	36	0	88
Uganda	44.6	91	85.9	3	4.4	6	9.7	-	-	4.2	323	40	0.6	30	-3.1	121
Ghana	38.1	61	59.3	15	11.1	24	29.6	59	37	0.9	24	10	6.1	14	-1.6	108
Ivory Coast	37.6	81	65.2	5	8.3	15	26.5	30	26	1.2	20	0	2.1	13	0.9	104
Congo	39.8	66	62.4	11	11.9	23	26.6	-	-	4.6	66	5	1.4	75	3.5	92
Tanzania	46.8	92	85.6	3	4.5	6	9.9	-	-	3.3	61	110	3.1	42	-0.5	89
Madagascar	42.6	85	80.9	4	6	11	13.2	50	50	2.4	45	30	4.9	37	-1.8	97
Cameroon	39.3	86	74	4	4.5	9	21.5	15	40	1.7	49	5	1.4	18	3.7	97
Kenya	40.3	86	81	5	6.8	9	12.1	10	55	1.2	20	10	2.8	10	1.9	89
Zambia	31.5	79	37.9	8	7.8	13	54.9	25	-	3.2	49	0	5.5	47	-2.1	96
Morocco	30.8	61	45.6	15	25	24	29.4	28	45	5.1	74	130	0.6	102	2.3	106
Egypt	27	55	38.2	15	13.3	30	48.5	21	25	8.9	153	1500	0.5	168	3.6	111
Gabon	48.2	-	75.5	-	10.8	-	13.7	-	-	3.8	56	0	0.6	83	0.9	97
Zimbabwe	40.6	79	72.8	8	10.5	13	16.7	-	-	5	49	80	0.8	59	1	81
Lesotho	46.3	92	23.3	3	33.1	6	43.6	50	55	2.4	47	0	5.9	29	5.2	80
Algeria	22.7	57	25.7	17	15.3	26	59	20	-	1.9	23	700	0	71	2.7	106
Botswana	34.9	89	43.2	4	4.9	8	51.9	40	55	2.3	19	0	4.1	38	8.6	69
Tunisia	31.3	49	23.4	21	17.5	29	59.1	20	15	6.2	81	50	0.4	55	3.4	111
Libya	23.7	41	18.1	21	28.9	38	53	-	-	12	92	625	-	104	-2.7	119
Mauritius	39	37	18.5	25	33.7	38	47	12	12	0.2	4	0	18.7	10	2.9	106

Sources: UNDP, Human Development Report, 1990; and World Bank, World Development Report, 1990.